

TONY HO



Tony Horseman (left) scored more than 500 goals for Wycombe. Here he is knocking one home in a pre-season friendly with Bedford 12 months ago.

Bodger — a 'one club' player

LOAKES Park will not seem the same without the bandy-legged gait of Tony Horseman, one of the most popular players ever to play for Wycombe Wanderers, whom he leaves on the best possible terms after 17 memorable years with the club.

In his time 'Bodger' — he received that nickname because of his work in a furniture factory — was one of the most prolific scorers in amateur football and certainly the best post-war forward never to have played for the England amateur side.

His only major representative honour came in 1966 when he played 45 minutes for the Great Britain XI against West Germany in a qualifying tournament for the Olympic Games two years later.

ONE-CLUB MAN

For one who scored more than 500 goals for Wycombe — he reached that target with a penalty against Slough Town in October 1975 — his representative appearances were scandalously small. The view of the management in those days was that he would not fit into a pattern.

But that was Tony's great strength. He could turn up in the most unlikely positions to score improbable goals. Others argued

that at 5ft. 7½in. and 9½ stone, that he was too small to 'make it' at a higher level.

Nobody knows the answer to that, but I suspect that with his exceptional pace, tremendous ball skill, and surprisingly powerful shot, he would have excelled at any level.

But Tony was essentially a one-club man — there was certainly no need to sign on contract because he would never consider joining another leading Isthmian League club. It was "Wycombe or nothing" for him.

This showed in the three other occasions he came close to resigning. The first came in December 1969 shortly after Brian Lee had taken over as manager. He actually resigned then but quickly returned, served out a seven day suspension and got back into the business in hand.

In 1972 Tony announced his retirement from the game at the start of August. At the time he said "I'm packing up. I've had enough. I've had a good run, but now I've lost my zest and enthusiasm."

Well, he soon regained them again because, noticing Wycombe's goal scoring problems from the touch-line, he returned once again within a month and became involved in the club's golden years of

success in both cup and league.

One of his most important goals came at Dean Court in December 1974 in their F.A. Cup second round replay with Bournemouth. Blues were trailing 1-0 early in the second half when Tony struck with a brilliant individual goal. Steve Perrin added a winner before the end and so earned Wanderers their epic encounters with Middlesbrough.

The third time Horseman nearly left the club came at the start of the 1976-77 season when Ted Powell took over as manager. After a month or so of the season, Horseman asked to be released — a request that Mr Powell acceded to. A few minutes later Horseman said he wanted to remain.

This unfortunate affair ended happily with Horseman staying at the club after all and it was Mr Powell who left before the end of the season after applying for the Malawi managership.

Under John Reardon last season, Horseman astounded many by finishing top scorer. But this was more a condemnation of his colleagues than an indication of his great sharpness, although he still scored some marvellous goals.

It was clear that Tony had lost much of his speed last season — not surprising for one in his 37th year.